

Getting Connected: Local Get Together Reports from Kansai, Tokyo, and Hiroshima

つながりを求めて：関西・東京・広島

2014 Tokyo Get-together Report

Andy Barfield, Ken Ikeda and Stacey Vye

We've had six get-togethers in 2014 until now, with one more to come in December, which will feature the *Creating Community: Learning Together* informal conference (URL <http://ld-sig.org/blog/creating-community-learning-together/>), a relaxing Sunday afternoon event with students and teachers taking part and presenting. This provides a new focus to the end of the year for Tokyo get-togethers, and we're all excited about how things will go in December.

The 2014 get-togethers have been collaboratively written up using Google Docs each time, where all the participants have been invited to contribute to the write-up in the week immediately after a get-together. For more details, please see <http://tokyogettogethers.blogspot.jp/>

This year, we've had an average of around 15 people taking part each time (January, February, April, May, June, & September), with September the largest gathering yet:

- * January: 13 participants (9 apologies)
- * February: 14 participants (7 apologies)
- * April: 14 participants (15 apologies)
- * May: 17 participants (9 apologies)
- * June: 15 participants (11 apologies)
- * September: 19 participants (6 apologies).



April get-together, Otsuma Women's University

One point that has been really intriguing about participation this year is that 38 different people took part in the get-togethers from January through to September. Of these, just a little more than half have participated in one or two get-togethers in 2014, and just under half have taken part in three get-togethers or more so far:

- * 1 person has taken part six times
- * 2 people have taken part five times
- * 3 people have taken part four times
- * 10 people have taken part three times
- * 9 people have taken part twice
- * 13 people have taken part once.

So, the get-togethers this year have had a shifting sense of identity from one month to the next. This has led us to consider how to create better continuity and involvement from one get-together to another, because without this it's difficult to explore issues in depth together over time.

At the September get-together, we reported back to the whole group on the patterns of participation in the get-togethers this year. We briefly talked about reducing the number of get-togethers for 2015 and trying to

synchronize more with the rhythm of the school year. That might mean, for example, holding get-togethers in April, May, June, September or October (depending on when the JALT conference takes place), with an informal afternoon conference in December 2015, to provide a space for teachers and students to share their work and research publicly at the end of the calendar year.

These changes for 2015 are still just a suggestion at this point. To encourage more discussion and get further feedback, we hope to run these ideas past Tokyo area LD members once the October 19 deadline for proposals for *Creating Community: Learning Together* has passed. We are looking forward to hearing SIG members' views and to reporting in further detail for the LD SIG AGM at JALT2014.



Tokyo Sky Tree
[\(http://ameblo.jp/tokyoskytree777/\)](http://ameblo.jp/tokyoskytree777/)

LD Get-together Report: Kansai

Brandon Kramer

The Kansai Chapter needs your help! Heading into 2015 we are looking for someone who can step up and become the Kansai Get-Together Coordinator, bringing everyone together for friendship, networking, and festivities! It's a great way to meet new people and help others build lasting connections in the Kansai community.

2014 has been a bit of a transitional period for the Kansai Chapter. Although we expect good representation from our members at the JALT2014 National Conference, the Kansai chapter has not been able to meet together this year, something which we hope to turn around heading into 2015!

If you are interested in taking on the Get-Together Coordinator position, or have any ideas for events and activities, please mail them our way. We are looking forward to seeing you in Tsukuba at the JALT2014 Conference!

Osaka Prefectural Emblem

A cluster of gourds, or sennari byotan, was the crest used by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598), the warrior who unified Japan and built Osaka Castle. It has been stylized as Osaka's prefectural emblem, the 'O' of Osaka linking with the three circles above it that symbolize hope, prosperity and harmony. This emblem was officially adopted on the 100th anniversary of Osaka Prefecture (June 21, 1968).
<http://www.pref.osaka.lg.jp/en/introduction/symbols.html>





Autumn in Miyajima

2014 Hiroshima Get-together Report

Jim Ronald

Hiroshima's LD Get-togethers in theory meet every month, and typically there are half a dozen of us.

In July there were just three and since then we haven't met up. Wondering how much continuing interest there is in continuing the get-togethers, I surveyed regular—and not so regular—attendees. There was a very encouraging response, both in numbers and in enthusiasm for the get-togethers, and we will be starting up again after our long summer-autumn break very soon. In fact, as you read this, I hope we will already have met up and be glad that our group is up and running again.

We still do need more than one person basically running the get-together—not that I don't enjoy it—I do, of course!—but when things get busy, I may forget to plan the next get-together, or wouldn't have time to join it myself. As for what we do, one participant's description fits the reality of what we do: "brainstorming sessions of research/teaching

ideas. sharing resources, reading suggestions, etc.", while another reminds us that in some ways our purpose is to supplement, or complement, what our wonderful Hiroshima JALT chapter meetings do: "Unlike JALT Hiroshima monthly meetings, the LD get-together is a more friendly and relaxing small society, so participants can express their feelings, opinions, complaints about teaching and learning more freely. From their casual conversation, I learn a lot of small things. The accumulation of these small informations are more valuable to me than formal academic ones. I hope this get-together will create mutual understanding between teachers and learners." To be honest, I don't think we do a lot of complaining, but as well as everything else it is, our get-togethers are a place to let off steam and appreciate each other as a community of teachers and learners.



Winter illumination is coming to Hiroshima soon!